

crap. I'm in the army, you know. G-2 told me about your problems with the underground. I know that they have your room staked out and your telephone tapped."

"Sorry, Paco. I just didn't want to get you involved."

"I am involved. I gave you the old pal act when you arrived. I introduced you around. I tell G-2 that you are clean. Stupid, but clean. I hope to God that I am right."

"You're right, Paco."

"Why did you try to leave Cuba? It looked as though you were running."

"Things have gotten all bitched up. This spare-parts thing is twisting off. My name is on the underground's list. They did the roughing up. The Russians also pulled me in last night."

Gomez took his cigar out of his mouth. "The Russians? I didn't know that. Did you tell G-2?"

"No. They haven't contacted me since then."

Gomez leaned back in his chair and sent a puff of smoke skyward. "You're in a hell of a shape."

"Yeah. That's the way I see it."

"I wouldn't worry too much, Chico. Cooperate with G-2 and you'll be all right." He pushed out his cigar. "As I see it, you've made two mistakes. One was going to that midnight meeting with Perez. The other was trying to leave Cuba while you were under G-2 surveillance. You knew that you were on parole to them, yet you tried to leave without their clearance. That wasn't smart. What are you afraid of? As an old army buddy, I'm telling you that G-2 is trying to protect you from the wolves. Don't make it harder for them."

"They didn't protect me from the Russians. They grabbed me off right in the hotel."

"How?"

Wilson told him.

"Well, what the hell, Chico? The swim at night was a crazy idea and you should know by now that the Vogel dame will set you up. Incidentally, I checked her out. She is the mistress of the head of Soviet Intelligence in Cuba. Apparently they were interested in you when you arrived in Cuba, so she looked you up, got acquainted, learned what she wanted to learn, and tried to drop you. When you weren't easy to drop, she had you beaten up."

Wilson grunted. "And I thought the little pig went for me." He looked at Gomez. "You let the Russians do whatever they want to do in Cuba? Who won the goddamned revolution?"

Gomez shrugged. "A little country is always kissing the ass of somebody. It used to be the States and the CIA." Gomez turned. "Hey, Rita, *chica*," he called.

"How about a plate of sandwiches?"

"*Pronio*, Francisco."

"So the spare-parts deal is twisting off. No further contacts?"

"As you predicted, Rodriguez sent a new boy to talk with me."

"Who?"

"A guy named Cano. Very neat, very clean, as the pimps say."

Gomez snorted. "Oh, Cano. You've got him pegged."

"You know him?"

"Not really. He's the technician type. He's not very important. He does what he's told to do."

"Then somebody asked him to demand a price reduction on the spare parts because I am on parole to Army G-2."

Gomez chortled. "I wouldn't let that worry you. He doesn't run the army. That's the kind of idea a Cano

gets on his own. The little bastard just scents a chance to make you buy yourself out of Cuba at some profit and glory for himself."

"Is that what I have to do?"

"Of course not. Just stay on the good side of the army. When this thing unwinds you won't have any trouble leaving Cuba."

"How do I stay on the good side of the army?"

"Do them a favor."

"How can I do the Cuban army a favor?"

"A lot of the army's equipment is from the United States. We badly need ammunition to fit it, and replacement parts. We've got the same problems the civilians have with their machinery."

"I have no U.S. connections. How would I get U.S. arms?"

"The same way you get U.S. spare parts for civilian machinery."

Wilson laid down a domino and stared at Gomez. "Are you asking me to peddle munitions to the Cuban army?"

Gomez took a huge bite out of a sandwich chosen from a platter Rita had placed beside them. "No. You asked me how to do the army a favor," he said with his mouth full. "I'm just making a suggestion."

"But I haven't that kind of connection."

Gomez looked at Wilson patiently. "Look, Chico, don't make me spell it out. If you want to get closer to the army, this is the way to do it." There was a silent interval. "It's your play, Chico."

Wilson made his play absently. "Can you put me in touch with the right people, Paco?"

"Yes."

Wilson thought a moment. "I haven't anything to sell and I don't know that I could get arms. All I could do is to try."

"That's all that anyone can do."

"I would have to leave Cuba to line them up."
"What's wrong with that? Just let G-2 know before you leave."

"What is the next step?"

Gomez gestured to Rita to refill their drinks. She moved over to the table, removed the drinks and, yawning, walked over to a small bar to refill them.

"I'll arrange for you to meet some of the officers of ordnance procurement. But I am not pushing you, Chico. It's up to you. I see this as the way for you to protect yourself. If there's any sweat, forget it."

Wilson took his drink from Rita and took a long pull on it. He began to feel better. Things were moving again. "O.K., let's do it." He put the glass down and reached up and pulled Rita onto his lap. He kissed her hard on her full lips. "Baby, you keep sliding by and sliding by. You take my mind off the game."

Gomez rose and stretched. Reaching to the back of his chair, he lifted up his gun belt and holster and fastened it around his waist. "I've got to report for duty tonight, Chico. Have fun. Spend the night if you want to; I won't be back until tomorrow morning."

Wilson hugged Rita. "How about that?"

She laughed at him throatily and gave him a long, lingering kiss, her tongue seeking his.

Gomez grinned and turned to go. "That ought to take your mind off your troubles."

"Oh, Christ," Wilson groaned, "I'm supposed to visit Maria's bar at eleven tonight. That's the underground contact. She's got me reporting in every damn night."

Gomez grunted. "Tell her you had a date and nothing to report."

Wilson was having breakfast the next morning with Rita when Gomez returned. "You have an appoint-

ment with the army chief of ordnance at six this afternoon at army headquarters."

Wilson swallowed a piece of grapefruit and nodded. "O.K., Paco. Do I need a pass?"

"No, just take a taxi to the Calle A gate and give your name to the guard."

"Are you coming?"

"I may be there, Chico, I'm not certain. Ordinance isn't my baby, but maybe I'll be around to give you moral support."

About midafternoon Wilson returned to the Vedado, showered and shaved, and slipped into a gray summer-weight suit. He adjusted a guardsman pattern tie in the mirror and grinned, a wry, crooked grin, at his reflection. Just what the young gun runner should be wearing, he thought. He glanced at his watch. Five. He had a half-hour before leaving. He took off his coat, loosened his tie, and lying propped up in bed, lit a cigarette.

He tried to act calm, but he was excited. This was an important army contact and it might lead to "Forbes." The spare-parts cover story had been a mistake. It was taking charge and getting out of hand. If Forbes had any idea at all of what was going on, he would know that he had to contact Wilson fast and get him out of Cuba. Paco was a major in the army and his friend. He wouldn't propose the arms sale without a reason, and he had no reason to harm him. Paco was really nonpolitical. He was a damn good army man, but his main interests were broads and sports in that order. Snubbing out his fourth cigarette in a filled ashtray by the bed, he pulled up his tie, slipped on his coat, and took the elevator to the lobby.

The taxi stopped at the Calle A gate and Wilson told a tough-looking young sentry his business. The sentry studied the picture in Wilson's offered passport,

followed by a hard, penetrating stare at Wilson, and then stepped into the guardhouse to inspect a list. "Go ahead," he said to the driver, "Barracks C-1. You drop your passenger and return immediately through this gate."

"How do I get a taxi back?" Wilson asked.

"Take a post bus to this gate, señor. There's a cab stand across the street."

The taxi moved down a broad paved street lined irregularly with royal palms in a neglected condition and turned left to pass between rows of dun-colored wooden barracks. Building C-1 was at the end of the row, surrounded by a dusty gravel parking lot filled with a motley collection of military vehicles.

Wilson paid the taxi driver and walked up three wooden stairs to an open door. The end of the barracks had been partitioned off from the rest of the building to serve as a waiting room. A sergeant sat behind a much used wooden desk while a private sat nearby at a table, typing by the hunt and peck method on an old typewriter. Empty wooden benches and green metal filing cases lined the walls.

The sergeant glanced up at Wilson as he entered. "Sí señor?"

"I am Señor Wilson. I have an appointment here at six o'clock."

"Yes, señor. I have a note of that. May I see your passport?"

Wilson handed him his passport.

The sergeant carefully inspected it, even turning the pages to look at the visas. He handed it back without comment. "Sit over there, Señor Wilson. It shouldn't be long. When you have had your interview, check back with me. I'll give you a slip to clear you through the gate."

Wilson chose a bench where he could obtain

some of the benefit of a revolving fan that stirred the stifling air of the barracks. He sat down, crossed his legs, and lit a cigarette. Pictures of Fidel and Raul Castro hung on a nearby wall. The picture of Lenin, which had been conspicuous at the INRA building was missing. Wilson sat looking at the pictures. They have come a long way since the old days, he thought. But I wasn't even close to them in the hills. They stayed pretty much aloof from outside volunteers like me . . . didn't really trust us. We provided needed manpower and a propaganda angle, but when they obtained power we were dumped. I didn't want to stay on, but no one likes the bum's rush, either. Maybe I'll get the payoff now . . . fifty thousand dollars' worth.

He finished his cigarette and watched a fly buzzing aimlessly around in a circle. The wait extended beyond a half-hour and he arose, stretched, and walked over to the door. The late afternoon heat radiated off the parking area outside and the reflection of the setting sun on a jeep windshield sent a wincing pain through his left eye. He went back to his bench. Maybe the jeep had been used by Castro at the Bay of Pigs. He wondered how much U.S. military equipment around the world was ultimately used against the United States? Probably a lot. A little more sold clandestinely to Cuba wouldn't hurt. They might have to do it to keep him in the game. Christ, this guy "Forbes" was a careful bastard. He wondered if he could ever get off his ass and move against Fidel. And Fidel was tough. Even his worst enemies admitted that. "Forbes" would have to be tougher. He wondered if Cubans came any tougher than Fidel.

A lieutenant opened the interior door of the waiting room. "Señor Wilson? Please come this way." The door led into a long hallway running the length of the barracks with doors at irregular intervals.

The lieutenant opened a door on the right about midway down the hallway.

"This way, Señor Wilson."

He stepped in front of the lieutenant as he held open the door and into a long, narrow room which apparently was used for lectures on ordnance. A number of conventional charts were hung against a blackboard on the far wall. A lectern had been shoved aside into one corner. Rows of folding metal chairs were stacked against the walls except for ten chairs which were in a semicircle facing Wilson. They were filled by officers in uniform, including two air force officers and one navy officer. The lieutenant motioned Wilson into a single chair which faced the semicircle of officers at a distance of about fifteen feet.

Wilson laughed nervously as he sat down.

"What is this, gentlemen, a court-martial?"

An army major stood up. It was Paco Gomez, but a serious, unsmiling Paco Gomez who only faintly resembled the Paco that Wilson knew so well. "We are sorry to give you that impression, Señor Wilson, but there are a number of us who are interested in what you have to say. This seemed to be the most convenient way for us to assemble. I have informed my fellow officers who you are. Some of them already know you from the past, others you have met at my home, still others you meet today for the first time. I am going to ask Major Rafael, the Chief of Ordnance of the Cuban army, to conduct the meeting. The rest of us will ask questions as they occur to us."

Major Rafael, a slim, intense-looking officer with a receding hairline and a scar on one cheek, stretched his legs in front of his chair, crossed them, and looked at Wilson almost indolently.

"You are a Canadian?"

"Yes."

"But you sell American spare parts?"

"Yes."

"You are a Canadian?"

"I said that I was."

"But you sell American munitions?"

"I don't know whether I can obtain American munitions to sell or not, but I told Major Gomez that I would do what I could to get Cuba what she needs."

"You are that fond of Cuba?"

"My record for Cuba speaks for itself. But I am selling spare parts to make a profit, and if I can get the munitions I would hope to make a profit on them too."

"You seem to have very close connections with the Yankees."

"I am in business. I have business connections. That is all. There is only one common denominator . . . dollars."

The naval officer spoke. "You suggest that we should trust you because you are brusque and straightforward?"

"Hell, no. I don't trust you, Commander. Why should I? I don't even know you. I see no reason at all why you should trust me. Trust has nothing to do with it. If I deliver, you pay me a fair price in cash in dollars. If I don't deliver, you don't pay me."

Major Rafael sat looking at Wilson, a little half smile playing about his lips. He inclined his head sideways and began to talk in an undertone to an officer sitting beside him.

Wilson let his eyes slide over the officers before him. He felt certain that one of them was "Forbes." But which one? Was "Forbes" covertly judging him now? Was this the group of conspirators? Or were some of the group the conspirators and the others window dressing for the meeting? What part was Paco Gomez playing? He tried to find a physical resemblance be-

tween Jane Forbes and one of the officers. There was none that he could observe. What should his reaction be if the real reason for his visit to Havana was mentioned? His pulse beat accelerated. In a group of this size? He quickly decided that he would play dumb. "Forbes" would decide on the time and the place of the contact, but it would not be in a crowd, Wilson decided, not even in a crowd of conspirators.

Major Rafael put his fingers together. "Señor Wilson, if we give you a list of our needs, will you undertake to procure them?"

"I will try. I have never dealt in munitions before, but I will try."

"You understand that such a list would suggest our military shortcomings and would be highly classified?"

"Yes."

"So that there is a real question of trust, after all, señor."

"I can understand that. However, I have served in the Revolutionary Army and I have a record as a reliable courier."

"Indeed you do," Major Rafael murmured. Several questions by the other officers intervened which Wilson sensed were designed to give them some sense of his character and reliability.

Major Rafael finally interrupted. "We are keeping you, señor, and we all have other duties to which we must soon go. Let me ask you, what prices are we discussing? Not specifically, of course, but in principle."

"I have no idea, but they will be fair."

"And the terms?"

"Cash, on delivery and inspection."

"Delivery where?"

"Not in Cuba. We'll have to work that out."

Major Rafael nodded. "Very well. I think that is

all for today. Do you other gentlemen have a question? Señor Wilson? No? Then that is all, señor, and we thank you for coming. We shall be in touch with you. You may become Cuba's clandestine trading czar, who knows? In such an event, we would find ourselves indebted to you for a second time." He nodded to the lieutenant, who escorted Wilson back to the waiting room.

"Sergeant, please run Señor Wilson up to Calle A gate." The lieutenant turned and smiled at Wilson. "You can get a taxi from there, Señor Wilson."

"Thank you, Lieutenant."

During the jeep ride to the gate he felt like a novice who has just passed his first test for initiation into a secret society. It was exhilarating. He began to recover some of the zest for his mission that worry and a sense of confusion had destroyed. He got into the taxi and lit a cigar. Wilson, he thought, you are one hell of a guy!

SIXTEEN

As the taxi neared the Vedado district Wilson realized that he did not want to return to the hot, stuffy room on the empty floor. What the hell? He could handle himself. Why should he go back and sit in his room on a nice night? His G-2 nursemaids could follow him. Why ruin the evening to make it easy for those jerks?

"Driver, make that the Biltmore Amusement Park."

"Sí, señor. Of course."

He got out on a corner and walked into one of the cheap bars that lined the block across Fifth Avenue from the amusement park. Moving through the bar-room, he walked under a large sign proclaiming Calypso Lounge and entered a large barnlike room filled with roughly used tables and chairs. It was early, just after sunset, and there were very few customers. A calypso trio was on a small raised platform at the far end of the

room laughing and joking with one another as they took out their instruments and prepared to play. They were dressed in broken shoes and tattered trousers topped by bright shirts of a sleazy satin. They nodded and grinned happily at Wilson as he sat down at a table. The leader flashed white teeth as he called to Wilson in English, "We'll be cuttin' out with it soon, man. Just order your drink and be patient."

Wilson waved his hand. Probably a Jamaican, he thought. He ordered a rum and looked about him. There were two or three women standing around the edge of the room watching him. Two were Negro and one a mixture, the combination of white, Indian, and Negro that drifted about the Caribbean. Well, that could wait. A little later there would be a wider choice. He sipped his rum and lit a cigarette as the calypso trio broke into a strident rendition of a Jamaican song in Spanish. The accent was terrible and he couldn't understand a word. All of the trio had their eyes on him, grinning and gyrating as they concentrated on their single customer. Wilson beat with his left hand on the table top and tried to look as if he were interested. This encouraged the trio to leave their stage and weave over to his table, where they stood shuffling and shouting their tuneless songs. When they stopped for breath, he handed them a five peso note. "Thanks, George, now save it for the other customers. I hate music."

"Thanks, big man. You don't dig calypso?"

"No."

"Too bad. Too bad. That's all we sing."

"Yeah? Also I'm tone deaf."

"Tough, man, tough. You missin' the most of life."

"I guess so, George."

"You ain't American, for God's sake?"

"No. Canadian."

"That's what I figured. No Americans here. No more, no more. I'm British myself. Come over here from Kingston ten years ago."

"Why don't you go back? That's where the tourist money is."

"I know, man, I know, but is also where a mighty mean woman is and five or six mighty mean kids. I do better here."

"You have a woman here?"

The Jamaican grinned and tossed his head happily. "You know it, man," he said, looking down at Wilson. "I got me more woman here than I can handle." He laughed gaily. "She too much for me. I'm over fifty years old." A gold tooth flashed in his mouth.

Wilson looked past him. "Who is the broad that just came in?"

The Negro turned and looked behind him where a tall, raven-haired mulatto girl with Eurasian features leaned indolently against the wall. "I never seen her before. They drift in and they drift out. Unless they are the regular girls they don't get a commission on the liquor the customers buy, but they come in for a free drink and to offer their ass. They do O.K. You want her?"

"Yeah, ask her to come over."

The Jamaican walked over to the girl. She listened to him, looking beyond him to Wilson. Then she pushed by him and walked slowly over to Wilson's table. The Negro glared at her, then shrugged and went back to his trio which had remounted the stage.

Wilson chuckled. He won't get a cut of this, he thought.

The girl sat down opposite him. She gazed into his eyes without smiling. "You like me?" she asked.

"You do fine. You want a drink?"

"No. It is almost poison, you know."

Wilson sipped his rum and held the glass out from him. "It isn't too bad. Of rotgut."

"Rotgut?"

"Just an expression. Well, what do you know, sweetie?"

"I would like one of your American cigarettes."

"Sorry, I'm smoking Cuban cigarettes."

She wrinkled her nose in mild distaste. "I will take one of those since you have no other."

He lit her cigarette. She looked at him through the smoke. "Do you really want to stay here?"

"No."

"Come with me to the China Club down the block. I will have a drink with you there." Her voice dropped seductively. "They have booths."

"The management would be very angry if they knew that the China Club was pirating their customers."

The girl moved her shoulders. "It is nothing to me, but the drinks are better and you do not need to sit across the table from me in the middle of an empty room."

He put a peso note on the table and arose. "Let's go."

She took his arm and they walked out together to the sidewalk. The soft smell of the nearby sea came to them and the amusement park glittered through the fir trees that lined both sides of the avenue. They walked down to the China Club without speaking, but she increased their intimacy with the steady pressure of her hand on his forearm.

The China Club had a bright red facade with golden dragons in bas-relief. Inside, there was a faint odor of incense and the same back room, reached through the off street bar. The back room of the China Club was smaller than that of the Calypso Lounge and

more intimate, with a line of booths around the walls across the entrances of which curtains in mauve could be dropped. It also had a small stage, but it did not look as if it were often used.

The girl guided him toward a booth at the far end of the line and slid gracefully onto the bench. "Sit here beside me," she said. Wilson slid in beside her. She leaned toward him, a faint perfume rising from the cleavage of her breasts. "Now you can buy me a drink."

A Chinese waiter took their order. When he had reappeared with it, she spoke to him in Chinese. He nodded and dropped the curtain. They were alone in the booth with only a five-watt light in the shape of a flower at the edge of the table for illumination. She turned and stroked his head with a light, languorous touch. "Isn't this better?"

He only had to incline his head slightly to place his mouth against the full lips which were offered to him. The lips parted slightly as he kissed her and she caught his lower lip between her teeth. After a slight pressure, she turned away. "Later. It is sweeter if we do not hurry." Her voice was low and beguiling. She raised her glass to his. "To promises."

He touched her glass and drank, looking over the brim into the dark eyes with the piquant slant. "I notice that you speak Chinese."

"A few words. I had a Chinese mother."

"And your father?"

She smiled. "He was from the Caribbean."

"Was?"

"I never knew him. My mother brought me up in

Port-of-Spain."

Wilson ran a hand over his forehead. He felt slightly dizzy and his vision seemed a little blurred. "Let's open those curtains . . . little air," he said thickly. "This really is rotgut."

He half rose from the booth bench, slipped, and fell heavily forward on the table, throwing his glass off to the floor, where it shattered. A small door on the inside wall of the booth opened and the girl slipped through it. Two Chinese men reached through and quietly dragged Wilson's inert body across the bench and through the opening. They were on a landing leading to a basement.

In a subterranean room they gave Wilson an injection and he soon regained consciousness. He sat on a straight chair, feeling very ill.

"Would you like some coffee?" a smiling moon-faced Chinese man with darting, expressionless eyes asked, hovering over him.

"Yeah, thanks." Wilson drank the coffee and began to feel better.

"My name is Y. I. Chen," the Chinese man said and bowed imperceptibly.

Wilson shook his head. "Can I have some more coffee?"

"Certainly."

"My name is Wilson."

The Chinese nodded and his smile widened.

"What happened? Did that broad give me knock-out drops. Was I rolled?"

Mr. Chen drew up a chair and sat down. "No, you were not robbed, Mr. Wilson. You will find that you have all of your papers and money."

"That's good."

"Do you know who I am, Mr. Wilson?"

"You said Wen or Ken or something. I was still a little dizzy."

"I am the head of Cuban intelligence for the Chinese People's Republic."

Wilson straightened in his chair. "Oh, one of those."

"Yes, Mr. Wilson. One of those."

"You know, Mr. Yen . . ."

"Chen."

"Mr. Chen, I'm not really worth it."

"Others think so. We Chinese are great imitators."

"No, what I mean is that the Cubans, the Cuban underground, the Russians—they all think that I am a big spy or something. They couldn't be more wrong. I came down to Cuba for a little sunshine, a little boozing, a little ass . . . you say ass in Chinese?"

"I know what you mean, Mr. Wilson."

"Well, I came down here for these things and right away everybody starts worrying about me. There is no need to do it. I am harmless."

"But you are here to sell spare parts to the Cuban government?"

"Yes, there's that. I figured that I would make expenses. I am sorry that I ever thought of it."

Mr. Chen continued to smile. "Very ingenuous. Very nice. Very well done, but though the Cubans may be amateurs, the Russians are not and they are interested in you. The Vogel woman contacted you the very day you arrived in Cuba. Why was that?"

"They check out every visitor who looks or smells like an American."

"But they have remained interested in you."

"I don't know why. Maybe they like to know how the Cubans are spending Russia's money."

"I suggest that the Russians may be trying to sabotage the Cuban economy."

"Why would they do that?"

"The Russians and the Americans are cooperating in many parts of the world to destroy the Peoples Liberation Movements."

"But they are subsidizing the Cuban economy."

"Why would they want to sabotage it?"

"Mr. Wilson, I have no desire to argue with you."

You are too ignorant to understand these things. However, you do not have to understand them to repeat them."

"Repeat them?"

"I know that the Cuban G-2 has you under surveillance, almost imprisoned, in the Vedado Hotel. I want you to tell them that the Russians have tried to bribe you to sell defective spare parts to Cuba."

"How?"

"By paying you five thousand American dollars now and twenty-five thousand dollars when the defective spare parts are delivered."

"But the Cubans will inspect the spare parts in Canada before shipment."

"They can't inspect them all. Besides, you can say that the Russians plan to bribe the inspectors too."

"They won't believe me."

"Yes, they will. I shall give you five thousand American dollars which can be traced back to the Russians through their serial numbers."

"The Russians will be very angry. That's not good for me."

Mr. Chen shrugged. "You will be no worse off. If you do not do it, we Chinese will be very angry and, of course, you are in our hands at the moment, not in the hands of the Russians. If you are prudent you need never fall into their hands."

"Yes. I can see that."

"Good. Rational, practical men fare best in this world, Mr. Wilson. I judge you to be such a man."

"Can I have a cigarette?"

"Of course."

Wilson sat smoking, his brow furrowed. "Do I keep the five thousand dollars?"

"Certainly, unless the Cubans take it away from you. It will be evidence, you know."

"Do you pay me the twenty-five thousand dollars later?"

"This is not really a bribe, Mr. Wilson. The five thousand dollars is all that is involved."

"I might keep the five thousand dollars and not tell the Cuban G-2."

"We have penetrated the Cuban G-2, Mr. Wilson. We shall know if you do not do as we have asked."

"I ought to get an extra thousand dollars in case the Cubans impound the five thousand."

Mr. Chen smiled wordlessly at Wilson, then he nodded. "Agreed, Mr. Wilson. Your cupidity gives me confidence."

"O.K. It's a deal."

"I like you, Mr. Wilson. Very much. Would you like the girl as well?"

"Is she still around?"

"Yes. In any event you must re-emerge from your booth together to reassure the Cubans, who are your presumed protectors. That being the case, you may as well continue with the evening I interrupted."

"How will the girl feel about it?"

"She will do as she is told. She has already been paid. Morality is the one thing she cannot afford."

"O.K., give me the money."

Chen took a wallet from his pocket, handling it carefully with a handkerchief. "This wallet can also be traced to the Russians, Mr. Wilson. Your fingerprints on it will seem natural, my own quite unexplainable." He handed the wallet to Wilson, then he took out his own wallet and extracted two five-hundred-dollar bills. He handed them to Wilson.

Wilson put the wallet in one coat pocket and the five-hundred-dollar bills in his own wallet in the other. He grinned. "We do all of our bribery in the imperialistic coin, don't we, Mr. Chen?"